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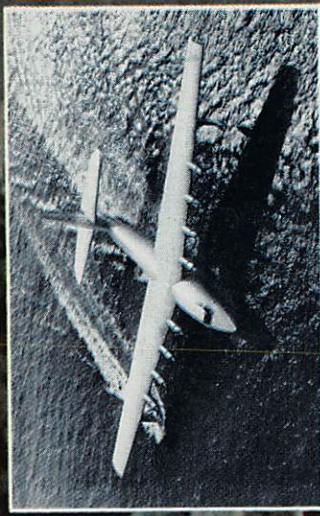
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SAVING HOWARD HUGHES' SPRUCE GOOSE



PILOT REPORT: SLEEK, FAST, FUN-TO-FLY TIGER!



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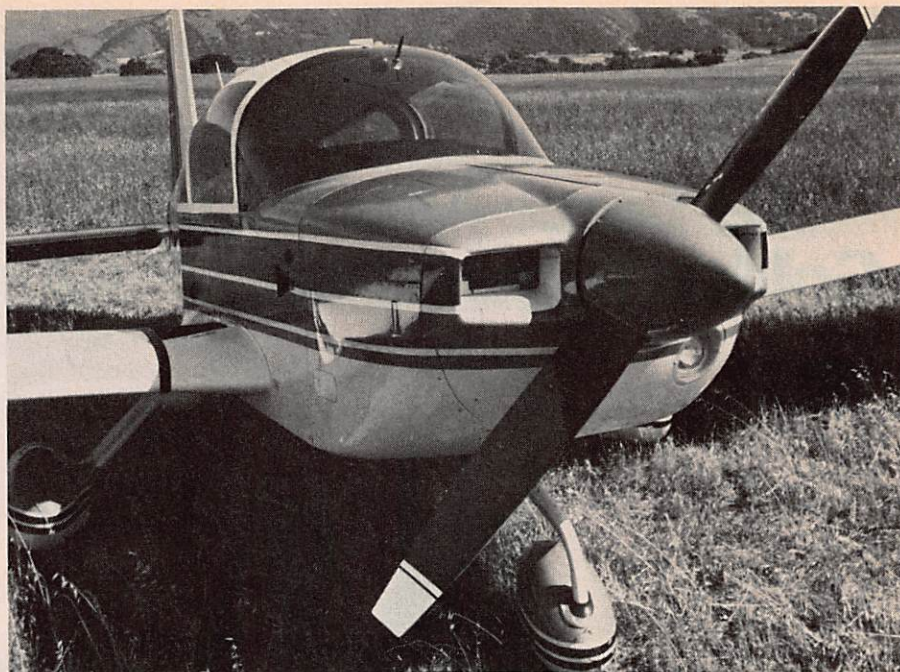
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AIR FORCE - A GREAT WAY OF LIFE 



PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM STONE

TIGER!

It sure is a different kind of airplane.

by Keith Connes

Very interesting, these planes from Grumman American. Ver-r-ry interesting. Sliding bubble canopies. Unique handling qualities, on the ground and in the air. And highly efficient performance. It's funny, Pipers and Cessnas and Beeches and Rockwells each have their distinctive qualities, but somehow the Grumman Americans are so different from the rest that it's almost as if they came from another country that had its own indigenous technology. Like Germany, or Japan. (Heck of a thing to say about a company whose second name is American, but I mean it as a compliment. It took some fresh approaches from overseas to get the U.S. automobile industry off its duff.)

The Tiger is the muscle plane of GA's four-placers, and let's see how it was born. Back in '72, the factory, which was then called American Aviation and was then located in Cleveland, Ohio, introduced its first four-placer, the 150 hp Traveler. It was okay, but it needed improving and designer Roy Lopresti came up with a streamlined version with a 180 hp engine. This was the Tiger, and it made its debut in '75. The Traveler stayed on for another year, but then was given the Tiger em-

pennage and became the Cheetah. Similar to the Tiger, but retaining its 150 hp powerplant and not quite as posh. (Roy Lopresti went on to Mooney, where he performed his cleanup act and produced the 201.)

Although there's a price differential of nearly \$6,000, Tigers and Cheetahs are selling equally well and production of the entire GA line for '77 has long since been spoken for.

For '77, both the Cheetah and the Tiger have been given what their ad folks call a Quiet Please package, including thicker windows and added insulation — a welcome improvement, since these aircraft are not noted for a cathedral-like hush when in flight. Also, there's a thicker seal for the canopy and baggage door, which I found to be something of a mixed blessing.

It was well over a year between the time I stepped out of my last borrowed Tiger and the time I stepped into N81061, and it took just a little getting used to. Pre-flight uncovered a couple of minor annoyances: the fuel caps were surprisingly hard to wrestle on and off, considering that they were the simple screw-down type. And the baggage door, which opens and closes by

key, was another finger-bender, due, I was told, to the heavier seal.

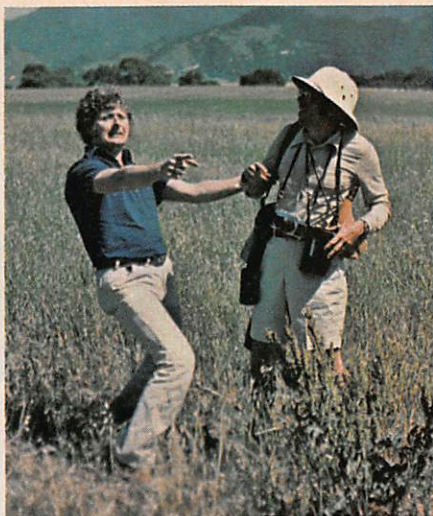
In the baggage compartment was a can of silicone spray, which I gather was for the canopy tracks; sliding that canopy open and closed requires a bit of exertion. The procedure for getting in after you've opened the canopy (huff, puff) is to raise the seat cushion, step on the bottom of the seat, then onto the floor, lower the cushion and sit. The seats are a little on the narrow side and quite firm. But what a view! You're perched high, looking through acres and acres of plexiglass. There's nothing else like it in a production lightplane, (except for other GA models) and it's just great. Now comes another challenge. That 180 hp Lycoming, carburetor and all, is crankier to start than any fuel injected engine I know. Hot or cold, it gets a couple of shots of prime. Then switch the fuel pump on until you get a peak on the fuel pressure gauge. Then hit the start button and pump the throttle simultaneously, adding a little body English and a few words of your own choosing. Eventually, it fires, shaking itself as if for battle.

N81061 had been gussied up from a barebones \$26,590 (which doesn't even





"Welcome to the Wild Blue Yonder Animal Kingdom. Today we are on the track of that glorious beast, the Tiger."



"Bwana, bwana, great Tiger! You come."
"Stop hamming it up."



"Third veldt on the right. You can't miss it."



"That's a Tiger, all right."

include dual controls) to a well-decorated \$44,505. This included about 11 grand worth of Narco avionics. I didn't much care for either the audio of the Com 11A's (at least in this installation) or the under-dampened needle pointing of the Nav 11. There was also a Nav 12, which was inop. The DME-190 was a joy to use; it has a lighted digital display, giving you a choice of ground-speed, miles to station or minutes to station. There was also a Century II autopilot with VOR/LOC coupler, \$2334, which did a pretty good job.

I'm always fascinated by the options lists these manufacturers come up with. If you want an oil access door, you

have to pay an extra \$19. (Come on!) Rear seat vents are \$110 and wheel fairings total \$394. Cabin steps, you know, those bitty things you put your foot on to get to the wing, are \$108 the pair. (By comparison, a Mooney step, admittedly simpler, is about \$13.)

So much for the options, let's get back to flying the plane. One of the unique characteristics of the GA planes is the full-swiveling nosewheel. It's terrific for maneuvering in and out of parking spots, although some people claim it creates problems when pushing the plane backwards. (I don't know why and I forgot to try it for myself.) But that nosewheel requires special attention

when you're rolling, especially in a crosswind. You've got to be ready with opposite rudder and brake. Speaking of brakes, I found I needed a lot of pressure to get stopped. Ed Lamb, the very helpful GA rep whose plane I was flying, assured me that 061 had just gotten new pucks and they needed to be broken, or braken, in.

For one who's been luxuriating in a Seneca II of late, I found the runup procedure delightfully simple. No constant speed props to exercise, no checks for fuel crossfeed, alternate air doors, cowl flaps, static systems. Incidentally, the Tiger's panel is generally well laid out, with the exception of those four



little gauges—ammeter, oil temp, oil pressure and fuel pressure—which are too far to the right to be in monitoring range. I realize that *something* has to be on the right, but it should not be the indicators of your one and only engine's vital signs. Also hard to see was the trim position indicator, pretty well hidden by the seats, but that's a minor quibble.

You rotate the Tiger at 50-60 k, depending on load, and climb out at 90, showing about 800 fpm rate of ascent. Even in a climb, the visibility is all you could ask for. I did speed runs at three power settings at each of four altitudes, and this is what I got:

Altitude	RPMs	KTAS	Book Speeds	% Power	GPH
5.5	2700	140	140	79	11.5
	2600	134	133	72	10.4
	2500	128	126	64	9.5
6.5	2700	142	139	77	11.0
	2600	135	133	70	10.2
	2500	130	126	63	9.4
7.5	2700	139	139	75	10.7
	2600	132	132	68	10.0
	2500	125	125	61	9.2
8.5	2700	139	138	73	10.5
	2600	134	131	66	9.7
	2500	128	124	59	9.0

The fourth, fifth and sixth columns are approximate book figures, interpolated according to altitude and temperature differences. The plane was somewhat below gross, but apparently it is, as advertised, a 140 knot machine.

However, I found 2700 rmps too noisy, Quiet Please notwithstanding, and did most of my flying at 25-2600 rpms. The noise level was reasonably satisfactory at these settings.

The Tiger handles beautifully. You've got to keep flying it, but it's a pleasure to fly. Control forces are light and the plane is very responsive. And there's power to spare; I was able to develop about 70% power at 9,500 ft. for a KTAS of 138 at an estimated fuel consumption of 10 gph. And in the January 1977 issue of *Air Progress*, Doug Gabrielle described an Illinois-to-Florida trip on which he flew at that same 9,500 ft. at 2600 rpm, trued out at

136 k and burned less than 9 gph. Not bad for a fixed gear, fixed pitch prop airplane.

Thanks to Ed Lamb's generosity, I was able to fly the Tiger for three days, under conditions ranging from gusty VFR to solid IFR. At all times, I was comfortable with the plane and was never bored with flying it. So much for my opinion. Now let's see what three Tiger owners have to say, as interviewed by Sari Schnepf.

Cameron Pitcairn is the grandson of the man who built the Pitcairn Mail Wing Biplane and flew it on the first East Coast mail run. The mail run was sold to Eddie Rickenbacher and eventually became Eastern Airlines.

How long have you owned your airplane?

Well, I bought it in July of 1975.

How many hours have you put on the airplane since you bought it?

Just about 500 hours.

Have you ever owned any other aircraft before this one?

Several years ago, I owned a Cherokee. Then I was out of flying for several years. When I decided to get back into

aviation, I was looking around for an airplane, preferably one with a retractable gear. Then I saw an article by Richard Collins in Flying magazine on a Grumman which was a new airplane at that time. It looked like a very good airplane, so I went over to the local Grumman dealer at CM airport to find out about the airplane.

What happened to the idea of buying a retractable?

Well, I had thought about a retractable as a possibility, but then I had a friend who wanted to learn how to fly so I decided to go with a fixed gear instead of a retractable. I looked at the Cherokee Arrow, with the retractable gear, but the Tiger is just as fast, even with a fixed gear, and with a fixed gear I wouldn't have to worry about landing with the gear up, or the expenses incidental to a retractable.

Did you look at any other types such as the Cessna?

Yes, I spoke to the local Cessna dealer and I told him that I might be interested in a Cardinal. But he didn't seem to want to sell me a Cardinal, maybe because he didn't have one readily available. He kept trying to sell me some other Cessnas. I set up an appointment

with the man to fly a Skylane, but I went over and looked at Grumman and saw the Tiger and I was impressed by that.

What did you think about the canopy on the Tiger?

I really liked it. I had flown the American Yankee years back and I always enjoyed the canopy idea. It makes the airplane easy to get in and out of.

Do you ever fly it with the canopy open?

No, I taxi with the canopy open, but I fly it with it closed. It's really too noisy with the canopy open.

What kind of avionics were on the airplane when you bought it?

Well, one of the reasons I bought it was because of all the stuff it had in it. I loved the particular radios it had in it. It had a Century I Wing Leveler, Narco DGO and Narco dual nav-coms, transponder, ADF, marker beacons, glide slope. Before I went looking for an airplane, I sat down and wrote down everything that I wanted in the panel of my airplane, and this airplane really fit the bill.

Was the airplane new when you bought it?

No, it was used as an instrument trainer and it had about 160 hours.

Have you added any new equipment to the airplane since you've had it?

I've replaced the marker beacon receiver which gave me a lot of trouble. It was a Narco receiver and every time I'd fix it, it would go on the blink in three weeks, so I finally had to replace it.

How do you use the airplane the most?

Mostly pleasure and entirely personal. I fly a certain amount of IFR, mostly just to keep current.

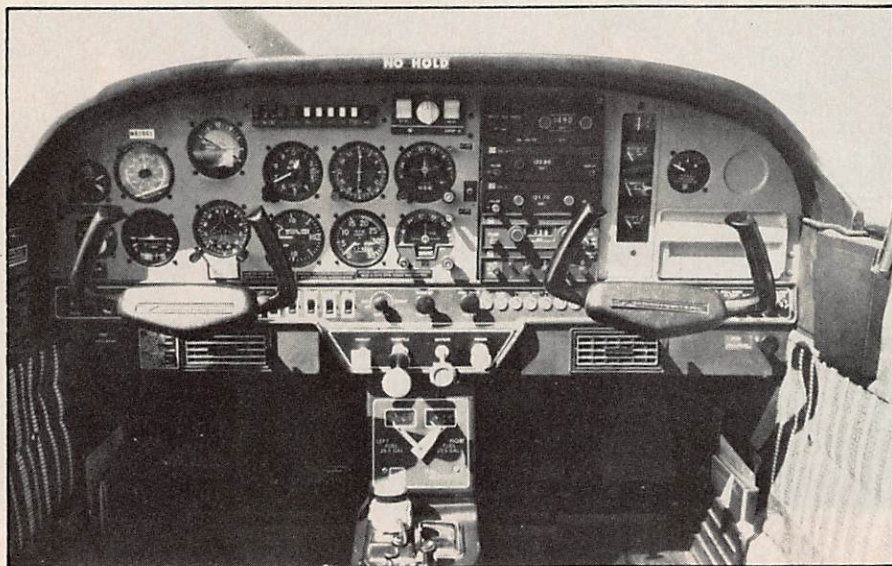
Now that you've owned the airplane for awhile, what features in particular do you like about the airplane the most?

There are three points that I like the most about the airplane. The first is speed. Number two is the all around visibility. I enjoy sitting up high on the wing spar, and being able to see over the nose, especially in a climb. Third, I like the control response. It had a very nice light but smooth response. They aren't nearly as heavy as the Cherokee.

What kind of problems have you had with the airplane?

Well, the workmanship is about average for that kind of airplane. There are some things that just strike me as being kind of chintzy. There are places where you can see that the metal was not cut quite smoothly enough for example. There were also problems with

(Continued on page 80)



The only quibble I have with the panel is that the ammeter, oil temp, oil pressure and fuel pressure gauges are too far to the right for a proper scan.

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT A "SUPER TIGER"?

It's an ill-kept secret that there's a prototype of a so-called "Super Tiger" flitting about the Williamsport, Pa., area, where Lycoming happens to keep its factory. The plane's over-size snout conceals a bigger engine and—what's this?—a constant speed prop. Grumman American's official position is that there is no such thing as a super Tiger, and anyway, it won't be part of the '78 line. □



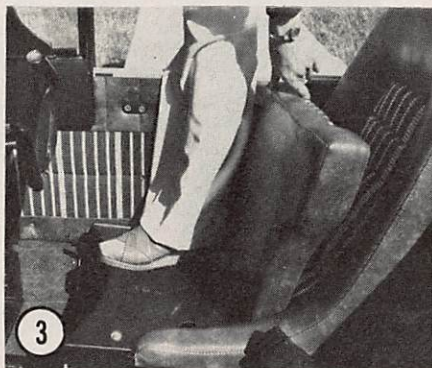
1

Getting into a canopy-type plane requires a little technique.



2

Lift the seat . . .



3

. . . step on the bottom.



4

Just like my convertible.



5

Legroom in back isn't bad, even for a big fella.



Air Race!

Story by Tim Stone

Photography by
Buddy Childers

Well, it's that time of year again, and I can almost hear the roar of those unlimiteds as they hurtle themselves around the pylon course.

This year, you air race fans will have a double treat in store for you. The Mojave Air Race, which was postponed from last June, is tentatively scheduled for October 21-23, and the National Championship Air Races at Reno will be in its usual time slot of September 16-18.

Photographer Buddy Childers, who is no neophyte to the land of big-time air racing, has attended just

How would you compare the two airplanes that you own?

The only difference between the two, of course, is the horsepower. You notice a little bit on takeoff and climb and it's a little noticeable on speed. But the extra cost for the Tiger is definitely worth it because it gives you that extra margin of safety. If I had to choose between the two, I'd take the Tiger. The next airplane I buy will be a Tiger unless they make a Super Tiger with more horsepower and a constant speed prop.

What avionics did you have installed in the Tiger?

All Narco. I have two navcoms, ILS, transponder, one axis auto-pilot, and I am intending to add the altitude read-out to the transponder, since it didn't come with it.

Do you intend to add any other equipment to it?

Right now, just the altitude read-out mechanism.

Were all the avionics factory installed? Yes.

Have you been happy with the service from the factory thus far?

Yes, I've been pretty happy with the factory thus far. They always take care of any discrepancies there might be.

What are the particular strong points of the airplanes?

I like the visibility and the speed best of all. The only other airplane that I've flown, that I can compare the airplanes to, is a Cessna, and I got disgusted with Cessna 150's and 172's because of the bad visibility, low speeds and low power. The 172, naturally is better, but after flying a Grumman I wouldn't go back to a Cessna. I have also flown Mooneys, which are nice and much more expensive than the Grumman, but the visibility again is a lot less. I don't think there's any competition there.

Have you had any problems with the airplane at all?

There have been a few minor things but as soon as they come up, Grumman takes care of them. The only problem I've ever had with the airplane, was with the primer. Apparently the O-ring in the primer was defective. So I went without using it for a couple of weeks, until they got another primer that wouldn't be dissolved by the gasoline. So when they got the right O-ring to put in the primer, it's worked all right ever since. Then I had a radio in the Cheetah that became very weak and wouldn't transmit except in direct line of sight. So the Narco dealers repaired that without any trouble. When the Tiger was delivered, one of the radios wasn't working but the Narco dealer again took care of that. But I think that

Grumman does a good job, not only from my point of view, but also there are ten planes in the club I belong to, and if any problems come up, the factory takes care of it immediately.

What are your feelings about the canopy?

Well, I like the doors on the Cessna better than the canopy, but I like the visibility out of the canopy better than the visibility in the Cessna. I wouldn't trade the canopy for the doors. I think the visibility is more important than the convenience of the doors. There are shortcomings in anything. You have to reach a compromise, of course. It is a little awkward climbing in but what you get out of the visibility more than compensates for that difficulty.

How do you use the airplane the most?

Well, I lease it out to a club and both myself and all the club members use it. It's as accessible to me as I want it to be. I'm not an instrument pilot so I don't do that much instrument work with it. But my son is a commercial pilot and he flies it quite a bit for that. I think that leasing it to a club is practically the only way anyone can afford an airplane. Either you rent plane from someone else or you buy an airplane and have people rent it from you.

Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

They're just really neat airplanes. I'd like to buy another one or else buy a Super Tiger if they come out with that.

* * *

Steven Karas is a private pilot from La Jolla, California.

How long have you owned your airplane?

I've had it since July of last year.

How many hours have you put on the airplane?

I've put about 80 hours on it myself.

How do you use the airplane the most?

Mainly for personal pleasure and for training since I'm working on my commercial and instrument rating.

Is this your first airplane?

Yes.

What made you decide to buy an airplane and to look at the Grumman American line?

I wanted to have a fairly high performance airplane and the Grumman fit that bill. It's very easy to fly, especially for someone who doesn't have a lot of prior experience, and yet it gives a good performance. I also had the chance for a leaseback arrangement which seemed to work out pretty well. I would get to fly the airplane whenever I wanted and

checked immediately almost that same day. I think that's avoided a lot of the problems. Most of the problems have been very minor ones, easily reparable with minor cost. It's a fairly low maintenance airplane. I have had problems with the upholstery but the factory will replace that. There was also some front wheel shimmy but that seemed to work itself out.

Have you been pretty with the backup of the factory?

We haven't had any problem with the factory. I think it helps a lot to be in a flying club where they sell Grummans. Any maintenance that needs to be done gets done quickly and I'm very content with them. I don't know how it would be if I was a private owner miles away from the dealership.

Has the airplane lived up to your expectations?

Yes, I think so. It's a good cross-country traveler, very pleasant to fly and a good flying airplane. It holds up well up to the specs that they have stated, very fuel efficient. Going over the logs, in all the flying that it's done with different people with different speeds, it doesn't burn any more than an average of 8.5 gallons an hour. That's all kinds of flying and a lot of it is just takeoffs and landings. It really matches up on fuel economy and performance figures especially the way I fly it which is just with two people, and it climbs a lot better than they say at gross, of course. Both for cross-country flying and pleasure flying it has really held up well. It's a very stable airplane, and very docile — everything about it. The stalls are gentle.

Do you think you'll have any interest in the new twin-engine Cougar?

That's a different kind of a ball game, but if it's very fuel efficient, then it may not be a bad way to go.

Do you have any more comments you'd like to make?

Just off the top of my head, I'm very pleased with the airplane and with the dealings with the company and the lease back flying club arrangement.

* * *

Those fabric problems the owners mentioned were due to the fact that GA at one time tried a Herculon fabric for extra strength. Unfortunately, it turned out that Herculon deteriorated in the ultra violet rays of the sun. GA has since switched to another material.

Well, that's the Tiger. As fast as some higher-powered retractables, with all the economy of fixed gear, fixed pitch prop and 180 hp.

But even more important, an exciting plane to fly.

You really ought to fly one. □

WARBIRD

(Continued from page 50)

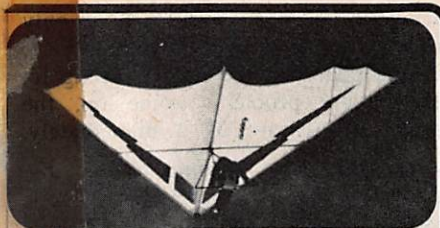
attitude change. Incidentally, once you are at the desired bank angle you'd better neutralize promptly or she'll just keep getting steeper and steeper. Once I felt comfortable with the turns I began combining them with dives and zooms for some real silver screen fun and games. Well, . . . they were probably pretty tame dives and zooms but they felt for all the world to me like the stuff dogfights are made of. Flying from the back seat, with zilch forward visibility, I was relying heavily on my instruments.

Next the Commander took over again while I tried to keep from screaming "yahoooo!!" at the top of my lungs and we headed once more out over the gulf. This time we climbed to about two thousand. The intercom crackled. "How would you feel about a loop and then maybe a barrel roll after that?" I had thought about this moment for years, never having experienced any aerobatics beyond the chandelle, and wondered how my head and stomach would react. I'd toyed for a long time with learning to be an aerobatic pilot of the first water some day and now I was going to take the acid test. I certainly couldn't hope for a better pilot or a better plane. "Dynamite!" I splurged into the mic, "let'er rip!"

Not knowing much about aerobatics or what to expect, I thought I'd better brace myself for the upside-down negative g's by gripping the cockpit tube structure for all I was worth so I wouldn't fall out through the top of the canopy if my belts broke. Of course, it was completely unnecessary in the Commander's perfectly executed maneuvers. I heard and felt the power change as the nose dropped and we went to 1950 revs and 27 inches, picking up speed.

At 155 knots, the nose started up and just kept on going, and the engine hardly seemed to labor at all. As we curved upward, I was fascinated by the classic effects of the g buildup.

At the top of the loop I found myself instinctively looking back up over my head for the ground as it came around into view once more. There it was, right on schedule, and my head and stomach felt fine, no discomfort at all. It was fantastic! Incredible! Delicious! Doing a loop in an old warbird! Life was being awfully good to me. I knew I would have no trouble with aerobatics. The barrel roll followed immediately and was equally totally thrilling.



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yet it wouldn't go unused. It was these reasons that made me go this way.

Did you look at either the Piper or Cessna lines?

Yes, I felt that Cessnas were too slow for the same horsepower and really didn't perform as well, and the same went for the Piper.

Did you look at any of the other Grumman products, either the Cheetah or the Trainer?

I felt that the Trainer was already too small because I was getting into instrument training and it wouldn't fit my needs in that respect. I considered the Cheetah and I felt that the extra horsepower and little extra speed would make an overall difference in the flying, so I went with the Tiger because it was the same classification of aircraft and a good performer also.

Do you feel that the extra money for the Tiger was worth it?

Yes, very definitely. What it gives you is a little extra safety cushion so if you get a little too slow, you have some extra power, and more performance. If you want to do a lot of cross-country flying or instrument flights, with full fuel you can carry four people also, which is one thing the Cheetah doesn't have the capability of doing.

What avionics do you have in the airplane?

Everything is Narco. I have two 360 channel nav-coms with ADF, transponder, and auto-pilot. For cross-country flying the auto-pilot really can't be beat. It allows you to concentrate on looking out of the airplane more and looking at the charts occasionally.

Have you added any equipment to the aircraft since you bought it?

No, I have not.

Were all the avionics factory installed?

Yes, they were.

What do you like or dislike about the canopy?

I like the fact that you have all the visibility with it while you're flying. That's really a plus. We're always concerned about the possibility of midairs, so the visibility is great in that respect. It's also convenient to get in and out of. I also like the canopy open while I'm taxiing—that's a nice feature. I keep it open until I'm ready to take off, especially while waiting for IFR release. I've never flown it with the canopy open but that would probably be quite an experience.

Have you been pretty happy with the backup of the factory?

No, no problems at all. It's been very well maintained by the flying club. And if any problem comes up, it can be